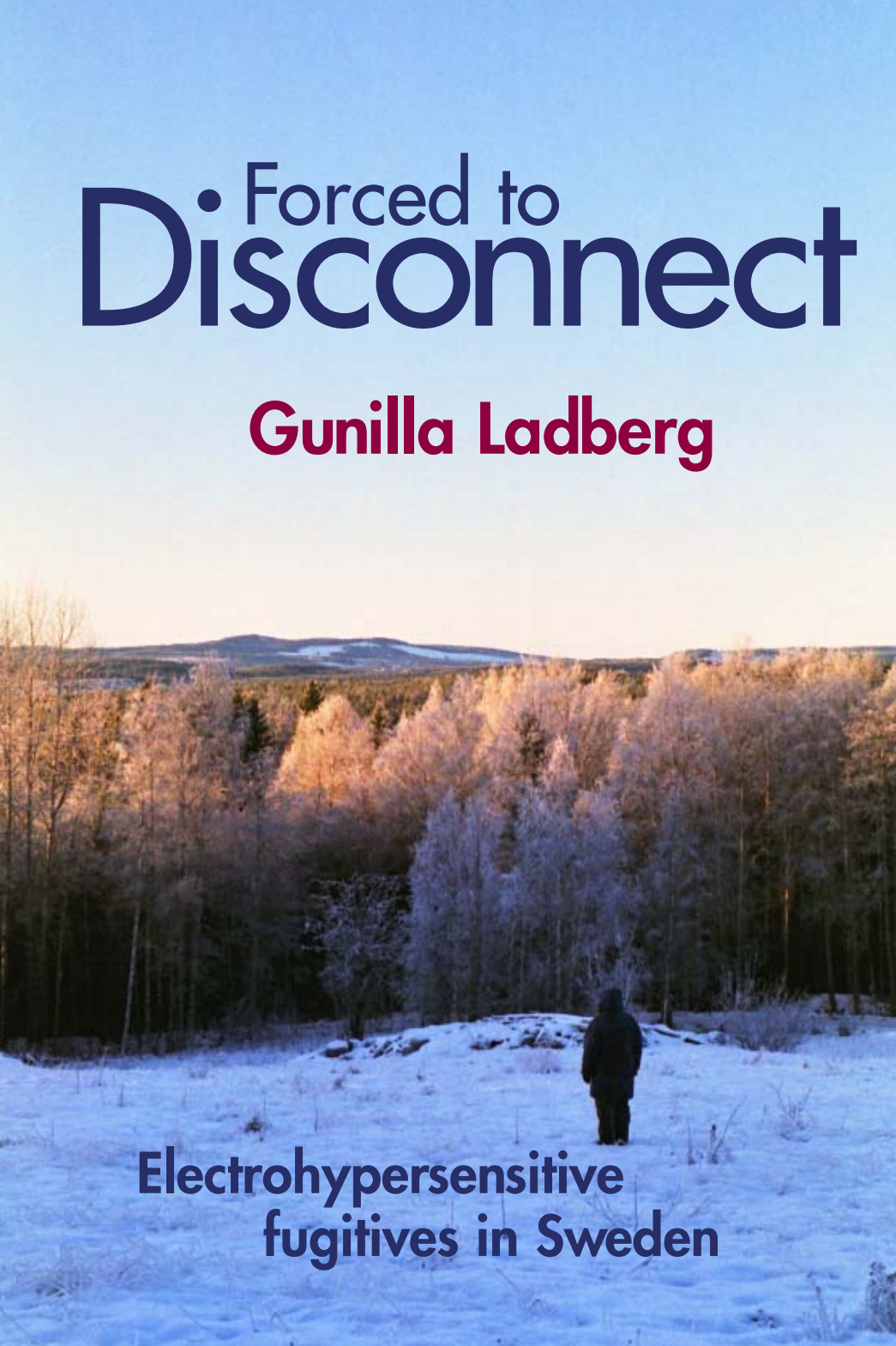
# Forced to Disconnect

Gunilla Ladberg



Electrohypersensitive fugitives in Sweden

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# Contents

Foreword ..... 4
Chapter 1. *Klas: Yes, it's a beautiful prison* ..... 6
Chapter 2. *Impossible to escape* ..... 10
Chapter 3. *Inger: In 3 days my life changed forever* ..... 17
Chapter 4. *Symptoms: varying, changeable, and getting worse* ..... 22
Chapter 5. *Maria: It's like being a leper* ..... 30
Chapter 6. *A hard life* ..... 34
Chapter 7. *Kenneth: I thought it was psychological* ..... 37
Chapter 8. *Losing family and friends* ..... 40
Chapter 9. *Not only adults* ..... 44
Chapter 10. *Contradicted, and not trusted* ..... 51
Chapter 11. *Human Rights: in theory and practice* ..... 63
Chapter 12. *Listen to them!* ..... 67
Appendix A. *References and Recommended Reading* ..... 68
Appendix B. *About the Author* ..... 70

# Foreword

This book is about people in Sweden who after having developed hypersensitivity to electricity or/and microwave radiation from wireless technologies have become fugitives in their own country.

I must first say that neither I nor anyone in my family has been affected by this condition. I started to write about the issue after learning about the health hazards caused by cell phones and other wireless communication gadgets. That's how I met a number of people who had become electrohypersensitive (EHS). This condition has disabled some of them to such an extent that they had to flee from their homes and workplaces to find refuge in forested areas as far away from electrical power and cell phone towers as possible.

Hearing their stories was a major eye-opener. The fact is that some of my fellow citizens are forced to live as fugitives in their own country! They are not fleeing from wars or terrorism, but from modern technology. They are fugitives in one of the safest countries in the world, or, what once, before the introduction of the latest in information technology and wireless communications systems, was a safe country.

The stories of these people need to be told – for their own sake because of the obvious injustice, and because this is everybody's business. Their stories are stories about us. People with EHS are no different from you or me. The only thing that separates us from them is luck.

I have travelled around the country and met many EHS fugitives. I have interviewed some twenty people out of more than 600 identified by The Swedish Association for the ElectroSensitive[1]. As certain themes in their stories kept coming up again and again, I decided to dedicate separate chapters to them.

Some EHS fugitives wished to remain anonymous, while others did not mind going public. "I believe everyone is responsible. That's why I want to tell my story," one person said. However, I decided to give them all fictitious names as not to spotlight the individual, but to emphasize that they can be anyone of us.

I wish to thank all my new friends, under their assumed names – Maria, Siv, Björn, Klas, Mia, Eva, Thomas, Inger, Birgit, Naser, Elisabeth, Kenneth, Johanna's dad, and Jonas' mom. Thank you for sharing your many painful experiences so willingly and sincerely. Thank you for your endurance. Thank you for putting your trust in me. I hope this book reflects my gratitude.

*Gunilla Ladberg*

1. *a.k.a FEB*

CHAPTER 1
# Klas: Yes, it's a beautiful prison

*As we walk down towards Klas' small cottage, I remark on the beautiful setting by the lake. "Yes," Klas replies. "It's a beautiful prison, but a prison just the same."*

*Klas is able to use some electronic devices that other EHS refugees cannot. He has built his own studio, where his equipment is protected from harmful electrical and magnetic fields with the latest in shielding know-how. This set-up makes it possible for him to work in the studio, as long as the overall radiation in the environment remains stable.*

I used to work in advertising. I also compose music, and right now I'm in the midst of writing a musical. Back in 1996, I used a cell phone as my answering service at work. I always carried the phone in my back pocket. One day, I noticed a big red spot on my buttock when I came home. That's when I realized that there might be something weird happening with this new technology. I have not used a cell phone since then. I started using a pager instead.

## Uncontrollable perspiration and listlessness

Before 1999, life was fairly uneventful. Then I got a job as a Web designer and a multimedia producer. When I started at my new workplace, my whole body went out of balance. My feet started perspiring uncontrollably, to the point that my eyes started tearing. I had to wash my feet five times a day. It turned out that my work area was 80 centimeters from a DECT[2] panel, and I was also surrounded by three computer screens.

I started having problems concentrating and I became listless. I had to make to-do lists and tick them off to get anything done at all. Otherwise I just ended up staring out the window all day. It was so frustrating. I lost all pride in my work. I simply couldn't manage to edit texts any longer. I kept

losing my train of thought. When I went in to see my boss for the third time, and he pointed out that the same mistakes were still there… I just wanted to cry.

## I stopped sleeping

Fortunately I was laid off when the dot.com industry crashed in 2002. I focused on my health instead and started exercising, eating a balanced diet and abstaining from alcohol. All of a sudden, in November 2003, I stopped sleeping. This lasted for 5 ½ months. I lay awake, and dozed off maybe for an hour or so each night. It was extremely debilitating.

After this time I began checking out my surroundings a bit closer. That's when I happened to look up at the rooftops, and wondered: "What's been put up there?" I had no idea of what it was, so I started doing research on the Internet and discovered: "Oh my god, we've been introduced to a new technology!" I realized that I lived 250 meters from a relay antenna, and that another antenna was located 110 meters from where I worked. I wondered if my sleeplessness had something to do with this. So I started researching. I got the opportunity to borrow a house in an area with no cell phone coverage for a while, to find out if I would sleep better there. I slept well the first night, and even better the second night.

## It's like turning up the volume

Some time later, I borrowed my parents' car and commuted to Karlstad city centre. As I approached the nearby transmission tower, it felt like someone was cranking up the volume. The tension in all of my muscles increased. I started experimenting by walking towards a few cell towers to find out what would happen. I wanted to figure out what was physical and what was psychological. Every time I was about 50 meters from the towers I started to tremble, my heart started beating irregularly, I was nauseous, my muscles felt weak and I began seeing double. It became quite obvious what was happening to me.

I got in touch with the cell phone operator, only to receive rude letters from the company lawyer, basically telling me to see a psychiatrist. Finally,

I realized that I had to do something radical. I talked to people who knew more about this condition. I also constructed a so-called Faraday cage[3] from metal mosquito netting. This cage helped somewhat, but it wasn't enough. One night I felt I had two choices – either remain in the cage all the time or flee from the city. I found an old cabin for a live-in trial, but that location didn't work for me. I was too debilitated already. Finally I found this place, and as I sat down in the kitchen I realized: 'Klas, you'll never be able to move back to Karlstad. You'll never use public transit again. And the studio you built will never be used.'

My studio had cost SEK 400,000[4] and taken me four years to build. It took two days to tear it down, load the truck and haul it away.

## It's the CELL TOWERS!

When I moved to this place I didn't know what EHS was about. The next big shock came one day when I was cooking. I suddenly couldn't handle standing by the stove. "What is this!?" I thought. "It's cell towers I can't handle!" Later, when I used my MP3 player, it took only about 10 minutes before I started feeling nauseous.

After being at this place for a while, I started feeling like a human being again. But that also varies with the density of the wireless smog. Some days I notice by my neighbours' body language when the smog clears. They stand up straight and start doing things again.

If the overall radiation were lower here, I would be able to work and compose music all the time. I don't sleep soundly; I sleep, but it's fitful.
No future

I've been on sick leave since I moved here, but this support has just been terminated. The authorities claim that I have fully recovered, and that I'm able to return to work. Right now I'm surviving on borrowed money.

Future? There is none. I drove to some friends once to stay overnight, and brought my Faraday cage with me. But as soon as I went outside, it sort of felt like leaving a submarine underwater. I'm constantly being deprived of

moving around freely or just having fun, travelling, enjoying a normal social life with my friends.

In conclusion, Klas says, "...those five months without sleep. Sitting naked on the floor, with splitting headaches, shaking and crying while rubbing my skin with olive oil to ease the stinging was the worst experience I've ever had." He adds, "Even ten million Swedish crowns a month couldn't compecompensate for my suffering."

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2. *DECT=Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications, or Digital European Cordless Telecommunications*
3. *A Faraday cage diverts electromagnetic radiation. It basically functions like a lightning rod.*
4. *@ 57,000 USD*

CHAPTER 2
# Impossible to escape

Most of the EHS refugees I interviewed have had to relocate multiple times. This is not the same as when you or I decide to move. This is literally about escape. “I’ve had to flee from electricity and microwaves to simply survive. I didn’t have a choice really. It’s the survival instinct, plain and simple,” Maria says.

## Eva’s and Thomas’ flight

Eva suffers from EHS. Thomas is her husband and is therefore indirectly affected. Both by being forced to live such a restricted lifestyle, and by his painstaking to make each new refuge as livable as possible for Eva. When I ask Thomas to tell his story he replies: “My story is parallel to Eva’s, and it has been for over thirty years.”

## Two years in the basement

*Eva:* “We used to live in Järna. But I became increasingly more sensitive to electricity, until I couldn’t cope with it any longer. There was no point in trying to further adapt the house to my condition, because the magnetic fields were too strong. I felt a bit better in the basement, and I lived down there for two years with only two peepholes for windows. Finally, we just had to leave.

We found a cabin on the outskirts of Södertälje. Thomas renovated and insulated it, added a garage and a guest cottage. We only had one neighbour when we moved there. By the time we moved away, 13-14 residents lived there year round with their televisions and their security alarms and so on. And then the expansion of wireless communication systems began. A cluster of transmission towers sprang up on the other side of the lake.

Life got a lot worse. I felt vibrations in my whole body. It became unbearable. I couldn’t sleep at night. Instead I would stagger around in the woods with our dog.”

*Thomas:* "We had to flee from that area too. We spent every waking hour looking for another home. We bought a camping trailer and placed it in a safe location for Eva. Then we sold our house by the lake we moved to Björnlunda, where we had found a nice house. Once again I took steps to mitigate the electromagnetic fields in our new home."

## Complete collapse

*Eva:* "I felt good there. I went for walks without getting tired. It was so wonderful. The hellish headaches had stopped and I slept well. I slept a lot actually. Then the new wireless utility meters were introduced. I completely collapsed again. We managed to keep our old electrical meter, but our neighbours´ new meter was hooked to the same utility pole and as a result our mitigation efforts were ruined. We were also able to measure this interference.

The utility company was not very forthcoming, to say the least. But we are getting used to that – being treated like lesser beings.

We bought an electrical filter which cost us SEK 16,000[5]. It wasn't great, but it was enough to help me carry on. After a while, something else happened, which made it impossible to spend any time outdoors. Wimax, the new wireless broadband system had started up. I kept staggering around and had a real hard time breathing.

We finally ended up in this cottage after trying it out during our holidays. It felt like a dream come true just being here. We returned home, Thomas quit his job, we sold our house and moved to this cottage instead. Now we survive on my disability pension.

We hardly use any electricity now, and the kitchen lamp has a shielded cable. We have an outhouse, and when it's cold outside, the indoor temperature is as low as +11 degrees Celsius. The place is picturesque, but now we are getting to the age when we need more conveniences. It is not by choice anyone would leave a warm and well-built house for a cottage with an outhouse."

## Elisabeth's escape

Elisabeth became sick when she changed careers and started using a computer.

"I attended a graphic design program and worked on a computer every day. It was so much fun! This was my chosen career. After I finished my training, I worked as an apprentice, but after three weeks I was a wreck. I felt dizzy and had heart trouble, headaches, skin and eye irritations, and could hardly concentrate on my work."

Gradually, Elisabeth's health declined considerably.

"In January 2005, the new wireless utility meters were installed, apparently the worst model. My symptoms became severe. I contacted the utility company, and they were quite forthcoming at first, and installed an electrical filter on the utility meter. But it didn't help. My testing equipment did not register any improvements either. When I reported back to the utility company their attitude suddenly changed. I wrote several letters, first to middle-management and then to senior management. Their reply was that they had done enough. It was not their responsibility to fix it."

### *One night here, one night there*

"During this time I was unable to sleep in my own place. I slept at friends', one night here, one night there. That was not a solution either. It's hard to find low radiation places for us suffering from EHS. After some time, I cleaned out my camping trailer and started living there instead. It was OK – for a while. I spent the days outdoors as much as possible, and kept the electricity turned off most of the time when I was inside. Just the same, I became much worse during the spring. I went away for a week and recuperated quite well. But when I returned home, I became just as sick again.

I felt I just had to get away, far, far away. But where would I go? I happened to notice a classified ad in Ljusglimten, the FEB magazine[6], about a place in the village Grangärde in Dalarna county. My partner drove me there.

That's where I met Erika. She suffered from severe EHS. Erika understood me; she knew what it was like. I couldn't sleep. I was so sick, and so scared, so terribly frightened. 'Am I supposed to feel like this for the rest of my life??' It was devastating not to understand what was happening to my body. Erika said to me, 'You can do whatever you want. You can scream, cry, fight or whatever you want. *But not give up!*'

### *I cried and kicked the trees*

"During my two month visit outside of Grangärde, I started to feel better. The old farm nestled in the hills, and I stayed in my trailer away from the main buildings. In the beginning, I hardly slept at all, only an hour or so per night. My body was completely out of balance. I lay sleepless night after night and felt very distressed. I went for long hikes in the forest and yelled, cried, and kicked the tree trunks. Every day I thought, 'How am I going to manage?' Gradually my body started to feel better, and when I left Grangärde after two months I felt recuperated.

At that time some friends of mine had found a cabin for me outside of Sala. They brought EMF testing equipment, measured the location and reported that it was livable. I went there to try it out. The cabin was quaint and situated at the edge of the forest. I spent one restless night there. In the morning my throat and lungs felt so sore. I could hardly breathe and had to leave.

I carried my stuff back to my camping trailer and stayed there instead. A new problem. Where could I go? I was all alone in the woods without a telephone and was barely able to drive. When the owners of the cabin found out that I was not going to buy it, they told me that I had to leave with my trailer in two days. I was struck by panic!

That's when the veritable moving circus started. My son and some EHS friends helped me out by moving the trailer several times. I tried living on properties of various friends and friends of my friends, but I felt more or less sick in all those places. One month, I parked my trailer with some EHS friends. It was really nice there. Staying so much closer to my old home, I had more visits too. Unfortunately, I was unable to tolerate the ambient radiation there either. I felt desperate. Once again I had to give up home turf."

### *Alone on a deserted campground*

"Earlier that year I had checked out a campground, and this became my next refuge – my fifth move in 2 ½ months.

That's how I ended up all alone on a deserted campground in dark November. Friends and acquaintances tried to help me look for a decent place to live, but all leads ended up nowhere. I sat in my trailer and all I could do was write letters. I felt so helpless.

More problems started to pile up. Where would I move in the spring? I knew I could not stay on the campground, when people started to show up with their cell phones and all their electronic stuff. How would I cope financially? I had been told that my sick leave had expired. Would I qualify for any extended benefits? How much? Finding an apartment in a low radiation area seemed impossible, but how would I be able to afford a cabin outside town? The relationship with my partner was becoming more strained.

I felt so worn down when I arrived at the campground. The constant moving in and out of bad locations had taken its toll."

Elisabeth was forced to flee a few more times before she ended up in her present home. Not an ideal situation but somewhat better than before, she says. She has now separated from her partner.

## The drastic escape

You may be forced to leave your home abruptly, never to return.

*Björn:* "On June 1, 2003 at 3 am I woke up suddenly for the last time in our old house. My heart was racing, my skin was burning. I had unbearable pains in my tongue, and a thirst that could not be quenched. The symptoms got worse with every passing minute. 'Damn, it must be the electrical fences!' We ran to the car for a quick escape.

It turned out that our neighbour had switched on the electrical fences at midnight for the first time that season without warning us first. Over the

years, we had been entrusted with the responsibility of turning the electrical fences off when we were at home, and turning them back on when we left. As it turned out, the owner, a nurse, was tired of paying attention to sick people during her off time too. She now wanted the fences to be on around the clock, even though she said she did not doubt that we had EHS.

Fortunately, we managed to borrow a camping trailer (with no insulation) for a short time. Living in our Volkswagen was a bit cramped to say the least."

## Live-in trial

I had never heard the expression 'live-in trial' before I met the EHS refugees. They often test a new location by staying there for a short while to find out if their bodies tolerate the ambient radiation at that particular location, which may vary drastically. A tolerable location the first day, may become intolerable after a week. That's why it is important to do a 'live-in trial' – we create the words that we need.

*Kenneth:* "Live-in trial is vital for me. That's how I find out if I'll be able to rent or buy a place. I have moved about 25-30 times. I have slept in cars and tents. Now I own a camping trailer too."

For the average person, it is enough to just check out a new place before deciding whether or not to move there. A live-in trial is hardly a normal thing to do before buying a house or renting an apartment, and any real estate agent would be puzzled by the request.

Nearly all the people I interviewed had resorted to live-in trials, but sometimes that was not possible. They take a chance instead, only to discover another impossible location.

## And tomorrow?

The ambient electromagnetic radiation at any location is seldom consistent as the concentration varies. What we can expect, however, is that the

overall radiation will increase in most places. We use wireless networks, wireless internet and electronics at home. Cars and stores are similarly equipped. Soon there may be no free zone anywhere.

*Björn:* "When the owners of the cabin next door show up on weekends or holidays with their cell phones we have to leave immediately. 'If you can't handle our cell phones, you may as well leave when we arrive,' they said. 'Could you please call us before you arrive then?' we asked. They did not want to. That's why we always have to be ready to leave. And we never know how long we have to stay away from our home either."

*Mia:* "I never feel settled, because I just never know about anything. Will I be able to stay here? The overall radiation is a lot worse today, compared to when I first moved here. Do I have the right to have access to my own home? Some politicians talk about hospital accessibility and so on. The home environment is even more important. We are not being treated like human beings. It's as if we don't exist. We are not allowed to exist.

We are constantly chased by wireless technology. It feels like being constantly persecuted."

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*5. @ 2,300 USD*

*6. Quarterly magazine published by Swedish Association for the ElectroSensitive (FEB).*

CHAPTER 3
# Inger: In 3 days my life changed forever

I've had EHS for 4 ½ years. It took only 3 days for my life to change forever! It happened in June 2002, when I had just bought a new computer. My husband was away on a school trip with his students, and our daughter had just left home. The summer nights were wonderful, and I spent them in front of the computer designing programs.

Right from the start I suffered from foggy vision. It was quite warm so I thought I was dehydrated. I kept drinking water, but it didn't help. The following evening I felt dizzy and had a prickling sensation in my face. So I drank a glass of wine, thinking that's what I really needed! The third evening I fainted in front of the computer. I didn't understand why. Instead I sat down in front of the television, and that's when my whole body reacted with a prickling skin sensation, dizziness and double vision. The next morning I couldn't handle standing close to the fridge, the freezer or the stove.

## Lengthy conversations on a cordless phone

I worked part-time at a drugstore and had used a computer since the 1980s. It took me quite some time before I bought a cell phone. Instead I used a digital cordless phone at home. I was politically involved and spent a lot of time on the phone.

When all of this was happening to me, I called someone I know to find out how EHS symptoms started. She told me about the prickling sensation in the face. I broke down and spent three days crying in the hammock. I knew I was in for a tough time.

What should I do? I couldn't live at home any more, so I borrowed a camping trailer and lived in it for a while. When fall arrived, I had to turn on the heat to keep the chill out. This resulted in me crawling out of the trailer on all fours. I couldn't handle the electromagnetic fields from the heater's battery.

After some time, I managed to find a cabin in the forest near the border of Dalarna County. It had no running water, central heating or a toilet. The

fireplace was my only convenience, and it did not spread much heat. I lived alone. My husband came by at times with clean clothes, water, propane and food. I had no heat until October/November when it got really cold. At that time, we managed to find another cabin, also without running water but with a wood stove. I lived there through the winter. Three weeks in a row the temperature stayed below -25 degrees Celsius. Inside it hovered around zero. I slept in layers, and layers, and layers of clothes. I scraped ice off the floor and my dog's water bowl. I had my suitcase packed with clean underwear, and when I unpacked them there were icicles dangling from the fabric. That was my life. I had no choice really.

## I lived behind a tree stump

One morning I woke up and felt unusually sick. A friend of mine came by and picked me up. She said to me, "Your face is the same colour as your white sofa!"

She drove me back to my house. I felt completely exhausted, and I don't remember much of that trip. However, I figured that the background radiation must have suddenly increased. Later on, I found out that a couple of new transmission towers had been activated in the area, as well as a new wireless tracking system for truck drivers.

There was no safe place for me anywhere. I found a fallen tree stump in the forest and I settled there for a while. It was the middle of winter. I only slept there. During the days I kept wandering about. It was a matter of survival.

Finally my husband and I bought a small construction trailer. It was such a relief. We put it close by our house, and this made it much easier to get food. I had no heating, so I bought a propane heater but could only use it in the daytime.

Throughout this time period, I had a nonstop letter exchange with the municipality. After many trips back and forth I was finally allowed financial help to mitigate the electromagnetic fields in our house. I received SEK 50,000[7] but had to add SEK 70,000[8] of my own money. In December 2003, I was able to move back into the house. But after a month I became sick

again. Why? A new transmission tower had been activated about three kilometers from home. I had to leave again!

## I have no home

I finally ended up in this place, a building I share with a few other people who also suffer from EHS. It was terribly substandard, with only a dirt floor, no indoor toilet and no central heating. Over the years, we've managed to make some improvements. The ambient radiation in this area is not low enough for me, but for people as debilitated as we are, such a place is hard to find in this country.

I never brought any of my personal belongings to the places I moved to, including this one. Instead I borrowed or was given things. I always lived with the hope of moving back home again. That hope has died completely by now.

Recently, I brought some of my own things to this place, for example my kitchen table. I'll never forget how I felt when I saw it here for the first time. I sat down and cried. This is my table, my scratches... I went back home for more. But home? No, I don't have a real home anymore.

## Divorce

As time went on, my marriage of 32 years finally ended in divorce. My husband could not handle being with me any longer. He had handled all my practical needs, like shopping, the water supply, laundry, and newspapers. He was amazing when it came to helping out, or thoughtful enough to bring me an extra chocolate bar, when I hadn't asked for one. But he never lived with me during this time. My weekends were spent in solitude.

During the summer of 2005, I suggested several things we could do together, like hiking in the mountains, canoe trips, or getting involved in the popular trend of mapping old rural homesteads. But he always said "no" to my suggestions. Finally I brought up our relationship with him.

It was a short discussion. I asked him: "How do you really feel? What should we do? How about buying a house in a forested area where both of us can live?" He answered, "I don't know what to say. I just know that I

really can't live like you have to live, without television, without radio and everything else". So I said: "We may as well let go and live our own separate lives, then?" Yes, he thought so. I asked him if he felt we should go as far as filing for divorce. That's when he revealed his true feelings. "YES!" he said. "Well, it will cost us SEK 450[9]." "I'll pay!" he said. In those ten minutes our 32 years together completely disintegrated.

## My daughter avoided me

Our daughter has been very angry and disappointed about our divorce. She distanced herself from me for a while, basically because she was scared. It's better now, and I have a wonderful grandchild who now visits me regularly. We spend a lot of time together here.

I spent Christmas Eve with them at their home for three hours. We had dinner and opened presents. All I kept thinking was "As long as I don't faint or throw up, this will all work out."

## The book bus

Sometimes nice things happen too. I've managed to arrange a few things for us here. With my political experience, I know how to get things done. Now we are able to use the disability transit service and get medical home care whenever we need it. I have also arranged for the book bus to stop at our place. This is our only cultural event, since the town library is not accessible for us. When we arrive, the driver immediately turns off the motor, the computer, the fluorescent lights and his cell phone. We leave the bus while he registers the books on the computer.

## "This is your life"

Two years ago I was quite depressed because of all this. I suddenly realized that this is my life! Nothing will change. I'm too debilitated.

National and international news do not always reach me. Sometimes things get a bit peculiar, like yesterday. A friend of mine called from Bangkok. She said, "I just wanted to let you know that I'm still alive." Why wouldn't you be alive?" I asked her. "There's a lot of gunfire around here," was her reply. I had no idea that there had been terrorist attacks in Bangkok. It's really hard to keep up with the news. Newspapers are expensive.

Suffering from EHS is a financial disaster. We can't take anything for granted. On the other hand, a very small change can be a huge improvement. Soon I'll be getting a propane lamp, so I don't have to be dependent on candles anymore. A major improvement!

## I want to be around when people finally get it!

This is no life. And now that it is getting more difficult to live here too I'm constantly thinking, I can't move one more time. I don't have the energy to do it. The ambient radiation around here has increased a lot recently. Over the last few years my health had somewhat improved. No more vomiting and fainting. Other symptoms subsided too. Now my health is declining again.

Yesterday something happened to me that I've never experienced before. I went down to visit Klas for ten minutes to check out a few things on his computer. Then my eyes suddenly were turning inwards, like being cross-eyed, although it was more severe. I had to cover one eye to be able to see with the other eye. It took a couple of minutes before it all cleared up. I was terrified.

Everything here centres on the most basic things in life, like having a roof over our heads and not freezing. Feeling like an outsider is very painful, as is not being taken seriously, and not knowing what is happening to us. From having been politically active with a busy schedule, within three days my life came to a complete halt.

Thoughts of suicide are my constant companion. Not a day goes by without my thinking about how to end it all. But today I'll get a new lamp! And my granddaughter will be visiting soon. These simple things keep me going for now. I want to write and tell our story. I am determined to be around when others finally get it! When we are able to say, "We told you so! Why didn't you listen to us?!"

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*7. @ 7,350 USD*
*8. @ 10,300 USD*
*9. @ 65 USD*

CHAPTER 4

# Symptoms: varying, changeable, and getting worse

My EHS friends describe a long list of physical symptoms. Simply speaking, EHS ranges from mild discomfort to unbearable symptoms. At the early stages, mitigation efforts at home can remedy the symptoms. However, when they are more severe, the only known remedy is to live in a location free of electromagnetic pollution.

*Eva:* "I felt vibrations going through my body. It was unbearable. I couldn't sleep and ended up walking aimlessly at night. I roamed around in the woods with my dog. Most people don't understand what it feels like. It burns and tingles, and that may not sound too serious. But it's so much more, and completely devastating."

*Klas* said this about his five sleepless months: "My head felt like it was going to burst, and I ended up sitting on the floor quivering and crying while rubbing my skin with olive oil to relieve the stinging pains."

*Maria:* "I felt dizzy, had a constant headache, tinnitus, muscle pain, joint pain, stomach problems and more. I was totally exhausted; I had such a hard time doing the simplest task. Total fatigue and unrelenting stress symptoms in my body that just wouldn't go away."

*Elisabeth* describes how it all started: "Dizziness, heart problems, skin and eye problems, headaches, fatigue and a feeling of being completely unfocused.

I stayed at the campground from October until May. In the spring, I started feeling gradually worse instead of gradually better as you might expect. I even became sensitive to sunlight[10] and had to wear dark sunglasses. I couldn't be outside even with double sun glasses. This was in March with lots of snow and endless sunshine. During my most sensitive time, I could only venture outside before sunrise or after sundown. Even so, I had to

wear double sunglasses. I ended up with severe bouts of anxiety. I was confined to the camping trailer for two weeks, until I was able to tolerate daylight again."

## Symptoms ease off – and return

Klas and Elizabeth told me that their symptoms eased off sometimes, unexpectedly and inexplicably, only to return later. The variable intensity of the wireless pollution makes it difficult to plan the day, or the following day. Or even the next hour. A regular life is not attainable. This is very draining psychologically.

*Mia:* "When I look back at my life I realize that I haven't really been able to tolerate electricity for a long time. For as long back as I can remember, my eyes became red and itchy when I watched television. I grew up in the country. As a teenager I went to the city to shop and so on. I knew I was reacting to something there. Was it the fluorescent lighting? I felt sick, especially in the subway."

Today Mia lives like a fugitive in the woods, in a cabin with no electricity. "My symptoms are fatigue, irritability, dizziness and numbness in my face, jaws, hands and arms. I feel pressure in my chest and find it hard to breathe. I get heart pains and shortness of breath when I talk. I also get unfocused and scatterbrained; I just can't seem to focus. I get tinnitus, earaches, headaches, a feeling of heavy pressure on my head, stress and anxiety."

## It just can't be this bad!

When I hear Mia and the others tell me about how they suffer, I become aware of my own reactions. I don't want to hear any more. *"That's enough! Not another symptom. It can't be this bad!"*

Afterwards, when I settle down at home to go over the interviews, the same thoughts come up: "Why did I take on this job!? I don't suffer from EHS!" That's when it hits me. Maybe that's why many of the refugees have told me about families and friends, who desert them by refusing to accept

what they hear. “No, it can’t be this bad!” And so they pretend that it doesn’t exist…?!

## It’s not noticeable

I ask Mia during our chat how she feels right now. She speaks so calmly and clearly, and I cannot detect any particular symptoms. She looks perfectly fine. She describes it like this: “I feel pressure and pain in my head and my jaw is a bit numb. My tongue is swollen and my hands are numb. I feel dizzy. It is very exhausting to talk to you and keep my thoughts on track at the same time.”

Almost all the EHS refugees I’ve met look healthy. When they tell me how they feel at any particular moment, I find it hard to believe that they are unwell – they just don’t look it! Maybe that’s another reason why other people don’t believe them.

## When the brain shuts down

Many of the EHS symptoms show that the brain and the body do not receive the right signals. Electromagnetic fields and microwaves apparently interrupt the body’s natural electrical system. Many of the EHS refugees describe this aspect as the worst part of it all.

*Björn:* “Even the most mundane task becomes difficult. I’ve done plenty of carpentry in my days, but sometimes when I hold a screw in one hand and a nut in the other, it ends up as an onerous task. Or when I’m about to write a simple note, nothing ends up on the paper. I’m quite a good writer too.”

*Eva:* “What’s really scary is that you could call me a little senile. I can’t remember things.”

*Thomas:* “I notice immediately when Eva reacts to electromagnetic fields or microwaves. One day when we went to the supermarket and later unpacked the food at home, I noticed a lot of unusual items. So I asked her: ‘Why did you buy these things?’ She didn’t remember that she had bought them. The anti-theft device by the cash registers and the store entrance affect her too when she counts money.

At times she walks around completely confused. Once she was supposed to buy some flowers while I did the grocery shopping. I went around putting stuff in the shopping cart. When I met up with her again she was still looking for the flower display."

*Eva:* "Sometimes my thoughts get so jumbled. For instance, when I do crossword puzzles I sometimes write down things that don't make any sense at all. What is really happening to my brain?"

*Siv:* "I may be standing with a cup in my hand and ready to drink from it. Suddenly it slips from my grip. But the worst part is what's happening to the brain. All of a sudden I lose my sense of self and my ability to think. It feels as if I'm standing at a precipice. It's like vertigo, and it is horrifying."

## What makes me sick?

How are the EHS fugitives supposed to know what makes them sick? Sometimes it's really obvious.

It was easy for *Klas* to figure it out. "When I got closer to the Lövnäs tower it felt like a volume button was turned up. Tension increased in all my muscles. Every time I was about 50 meters from the tower I started trembling. My heart started beating irregularly, I got nauseous, my muscles felt weak and I had double vision."

Klas also noticed different symptoms from different transmission systems. "With GSM[11] it feels like a burning sensation in my head, my stomach muscles contract with cramps, my hands feel larger, and I get heart trouble. With UMTS[12] my muscles tighten and it feels like my heart is going to stop beating. It's really important to get away from the source as fast as possible. With digital cordless phones[13] I get a buzzing and crawly feeling under my skin, and a constant pressure in my head."

*Elisabeth* says this about one of the places she had to flee from: "There were electrical fences close by. I could tolerate them before, but when the new wireless utility meters were installed I couldn't live there any longer. This added burden turned out to be too much for me. I couldn't even manage to talk on the phone. At night I tried to sleep in my car. It was

parked in the woods but I still couldn't sleep. I lost weight and food passed right through me. My body was completely out of balance."

## "I thought it was psychological"

Sometimes it is quite hard to figure out what is actually causing the symptoms.

"I thought it was psychological," *Kenneth* says after telling me how he became dizzy and lost his focus every time he entered a store. When he felt sick in some of the apartments he lived in, for quite some time he linked the symptoms to mould.

*Naser:* "When I experienced my first EHS symptoms, it was difficult to decipher what triggered them. At the time I reacted strongly to an electric candelabra, so I covered it with plastic wrap thinking it was the lacquer that bothered me. But it was the electromagnetic fields. And with the cell phones – I thought my reactions came from the chemical vapours. After a while, I knew how to differentiate between these things."

## "I should feel good here…"

Sometimes the symptoms manifest suddenly and are therefore a bit tricky to figure out.

*Eva:* "Once we visited a cottage from the 17th century. It was fascinating to view it but I didn't feel well inside. I thought, 'I must be going mad! There's no electricity in this old house, so this place should make me feel good.' That's when Thomas said: 'Take a good look around. There are motion detectors and surveillance cameras all over this building.' I had been admiring the beautiful old furniture and did not pay attention to such things.

One sunny summer day after we bought the cottage outside Södertälje, we took off in the rowboat across the lake. Suddenly I felt worse in one particular area of the lake. We rowed away from there in a hurry, and I felt immediately better. After some time we noticed a sign that read: High Voltage Cable. It had been submerged along the bottom of the lake.

Thomas is often able to notice when I react to something, although I may be unaware of it myself."

## Visible symptoms come handy

My hostess *Siv* and I decide to go for a hike in the woods. A fresh blanket of snow is on the ground, and we notice some animal tracks. Siv stops and studies the tracks. "I wonder what it is. Not a wolf anyway, their tracks are bigger. Maybe a dog, although I can't see any human footprints. It must be a stray dog." Siv finds this a bit peculiar, because the dogs in the neighbourhood are not allowed to run loose.

During our walk Siv's face gets increasingly red and puffy. When we return to the cottage her face is beet red. I am quite concerned and wonder what's wrong. "I don't know," she answers. "I felt something the whole time. Some forestry equipment maybe?"

After a while we leave the cottage again, but in another direction downhill towards the road. That's when we happen to cross paths with a hunter carrying a shotgun. "This is our explanation," Siv says. "They are still moose hunting. It is the hunter's cell phone I reacted to and also to their dogs, because they carry GPS trackers on their collars."

Later that day Siv wryly remarks how practical it is to get a red and puffy face, so people cannot help but notice how affected she is by electromagnetic radiation.

## Involuntary testing

*Björn:* "When we first came to this area, other EHS refugees warned us about the forestry equipment. 'It's possible to feel the effects from 10 kilometers away,' they said. It can't be that bad, we thought. In the beginning, it was absolutely wonderful around here. But one night I woke up and felt terrible. I got up, looked out the window and saw a shining light three mountain ridges away. After a while the tension eased off. I looked out again – no lights! Suddenly I felt worse again, and I noticed the lights once more. These machines drive up and down the mountain ridges. When they get to the top of the ridges, the radiation from them reaches us too."

An involuntary provocation test happened when I first visited Siv and Björn. After we'd been chatting for a few hours, they politely asked me: "Did you bring something with a battery? A digital camera maybe? We react to them too." Oh no, I never even suspected the digital camera! What should I do now? Fortunately, removing the batteries did the trick.

## The electromagnetic burden accumulates

The physical stress symptoms that many EHS refugees experience often has a cumulative effect that manifests as 'burnout.' This actually makes a lot of sense.

Stress, whatever its cause may be, affects the same systems in our body and brain. The stress defense and the immune system kicks in regardless of the root causes. It may be chemicals, drugs, the flu, psychological distress, work-related stress, electrical energy or a combination of several factors.

Each stress factor contributes to the total physiological burden.
If the individual's immune system is already compromised by one or several causes, the addition of one more factor may be the breaking point. For example, Elisabeth could tolerate electrical fences. Her overload happened with the additional radiation from the new wireless utility meters.

## A lowered threshold

When the burden of electromagnetic radiation becomes too much, the symptoms also intensify. This, in turn, results in longer recuperation time. The physical resistance is lowered, making the individual more sensitive. The price someone pays for ignoring the physical symptoms is high, and many end up with lifelong disabilities.

*Mia:* "The overall radiation is getting worse around here. But it's still better to stay put in this cabin and not venture into town. Sometimes we have to go shopping or, as in my case, make it to the vet with my dog. I know I'm disabled and I don't want to make it worse, so I look after myself by staying at home as much as possible."

## "I look forward to the relief"

Many who suffer from EHS find it hard to describe the severity of their situation in a way that others will understand.

"That's how we all feel before we go on vacation," one politician remarked when a couple of EHS refugees recounted their stories. Hardly. We need to listen more closely.

"Everything is in shambles, and it's hard to focus on anything at all."

"My brain only seems to have a 20 % capacity. It's getting harder and harder to think clearly."

"Sometimes I just want to die," are words most people blurt out carelessly at some point in their lives. I have done it myself, but I'll likely not do it again.

"I don't think I'll commit suicide. I hope not. But I look forward to the relief."

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*10 Sunlight is like electricity, a form of electromagnetic radiation.*

*11. GSM=Global System for Mobile Communications. 2nd Generation.*

*12. UMTS= Universal Mobile Telecommunications System. 3rd Generation.*

*13. DECT= Digital Enhanced Cordless Telecommunications*

CHAPTER 5

# Maria: It's like being a leper

*Maria is a petite, dark-haired woman in her 50s with a calm and quiet demeanour. She once worked as a teacher.*

I started getting EHS symptoms about 17-18 years ago, but I didn't understand what it was until much later. At that time, nothing was written about EHS.

I used to feel a bit sick and had a prickling sensation in both my hands and feet when I watched television. My health declined over time, but I kept on working because I wanted to be like everybody else. I pushed myself every day at work. I had no clue how to interpret my body signals, so I kept working until I finally crashed. I became really nauseous and my skin turned yellow, so I presume my liver was somehow affected. I had double vision and my heart kept racing. My short-term memory doesn't work, my ability to concentrate, I'm simply unable to focus. I have sleep problems and heart spasms. It's just gotten worse.

I have been diagnosed with both fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue.

## When it's really serious I end up in bed vomiting

I react both to electricity and microwaves. 3G[14] wireless signals make everything much worse. I had to flee to this place because I got very sick from the transmission towers. I get heart spasms from microwave radiation, but not from electricity. Otherwise the symptoms are basically the same from both. Dizziness, headaches, tinnitus, aching muscles and joints, stomach problems and so on. When it´s really serious, I end up in bed vomiting.

My sleep problems are serious. I lie awake a lot. After I have been sleep deprived for a while, I feel like I'm going crazy. I feel completely exhausted and the simplest physical activity becomes overwhelming, and with no strength to do anything. When it's really bad, I eat dinner directly out of a

tin can. It feels like my head is not working at all. The stress in my body is intense. It's like feeling constantly thrashed about.

## A fight for my life

I have lived in a cabin without heat or water, where it took me half an hour by bike to get water. I have lived in tents, in an attic and on park benches.

Ultimately it's all about getting food and a roof over my head. Every morning that I manage to get up and get dressed is a victory.

## Homeless

One year, I lived in a tent from spring to fall. At that time I moved to the attic in an apartment building. It was really cold, but at least I was protected from the wind and snow. I lived there for 8-9 months. That was my year of being homeless. I spent the days on park benches, because when the tenants woke up they started using electrical stoves, electrical devices, the TV and everything else. I had to flee from the building. I was lucky to have the handrail to guide me down the stairs. Otherwise I would have stumbled down, my balance was so bad.

The doctor at the city clinic believed that I had EHS, but said he was unable to help me. Society doesn't have the resources.

## The joy in my life

I have been an EHS fugitive since 2000. My siblings, their children and my friends are a big comfort to me. They accept my sickness, which is a relief. It was really hard to leave them behind when I had to flee from the city. My near and dear ones were my security net.

It felt like my whole world came crashing down when I had to leave them behind, like the ground I walked on simply disappeared from under my feet. Those people mean everything to me. They are still around. Some of them still visit, but not very often. We talk on the phone, but only short conversations. I can't talk on the phone for a long time, so we write to each other instead. That's the joy in my life now.

I found this place through an advertisement in Ljusglimten[15]. I did a live-in trial for a month because I had to flee from the 3G[16] tower in my neighbourhood. Before that time I experienced problems with electricity, TV masts, and my neighbours' cell phones and cordless phones. I lived by the 3G tower for 1½ year while trying to find another home. I could hardly stand on my feet. I was actually too exhausted to move, but I carried it through on sheer willpower.

I have lived here for almost a year and a half now. I feel so drained most of the time. Exhausted and weak, there is not much I really manage to do. But the electrical situation is better here. One of my next door neighbours used to have electricity, but when the electricity in that house was turned off I felt better.

## The lepers were fortunate to get their own islands

I have no idea how long I'll be able to stay put. The stress symptoms in my body are a constant threat. Living with uncertainty is debilitating.

This community is now in the midst of choosing between the installation of wireless internet or fibre-optic cable. We have not heard the final decision yet. This insecurity is really hard to live with. My thoughts are preoccupied with being forced to move once again. Should I start packing? Where will I end up? There is no help out there. I've pleaded for help in every community I've lived in. The only answer I get is, "Sorry, we can't help you."

It's as if we had leprosy or something like that, but at least the lepers were fortunate enough to get their own islands. Society acknowledged their sickness. Life is really hard without any help. It is hard to be so marginalized and have no right to the social assistance others take for granted. There is no political will to create low radiation areas for us to live in either.

## Living in exile in my own country

It brings on such sadness and depression not to have any access to my community or to my country – not being able to go to the movies,

concerts, theatres and museums. I'm not able to listen to the radio or a record player. Talking on the phone is only possible for short periods of time. Candles are my only source of light, but they are not bright enough for reading, sewing or anything else really. The lack of things to do is not healthy for either body or soul. I love walking in the forest, but I can only manage shorter walks.

Living like this makes it really easy to empathize with the plights of other people, with other EHS fugitives and all the people who have to flee war and terror. Our situation is not so different from theirs'. Our circumstances are the same – we all had to flee.

## The great sorrow: young people

What really hurts is when I think of the children and the young people. They are the future of the country, they are the ones who should make wise decisions in the years to come. A worst case scenario is that a whole generation will be more or less damaged from this giant health experiment. This is total insanity.

I have re-evaluated my priorities several times during these years and have become more humble towards life. I've always been environmentally aware, but I am even more so today. We need to be very careful and protect what we've got; to prioritize what's important for everyone. Democracy means equal opportunity. Everyone deserves a decent life. All of us have potential, and nobody should be left out.

This is a real-life tragedy, a serious trauma. I'm not bitter or angry, but there's such sorrow in my heart.

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14. *UMTS= Universal Mobile Telecommunications Systems*
15. *Quarterly magazine for the members of FEB-The Swedish Association of the ElectroSensitive*
16. *3G= 3rd Generation wireless telecommunications systems, UMTS.*

CHAPTER 6
# A hard life

Can you imagine a life without the following: TV, radio, telephone, computer, record player, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, light bulbs? Only a wood stove for heating and candles for light?

Not likely. None of the people I interviewed could imagine this either before they were forced to live this way. One of the many barriers that make the life of an EHS fugitive so hard is all the things he or she has to do without.

Imagine not being able to walk around town or to go shopping, not even for groceries, or go to the recreation centre or play your favorite sport. Movies, concerts, libraries? Impossible. Even a doctor's or dentist's office.

Trying on new clothes in a store is off limits too. Shopping by mail order or wearing others' hand-me-downs becomes the norm. Get someone to do your shopping for you or, if you have no choice, write down a precise list of what you need, rush into the store, pick out your items quickly before the dizziness and disorientation overwhelm you, and then get out of there as quickly as you can. You can count on feeling sicker for a day or more afterwards.

You cannot travel by public transit because of the ubiquitous use of electronics in trains, buses and cars. You may be able to travel in an old car with basic electronics or maybe no car at all. Instead, you're being involuntarily stuck in one place, and not able to visit your aging parents or your children whenever they need you.

*Maria:* "It's a real sorrow not having access to movies, concerts, theatre, museums… Not being able to go to doctors or dentists and stores. I can handle one store in this community, but I always feel worse afterwards.
I can't listen to music or the radio. Short phone calls are OK.
I can only use candles. The light is too soft for reading or sewing, so I don't do much of anything."

*Mia:* "I moved here with my dog three years ago. It took a week to warm up the house. The first morning I woke up to +2 Celsius, the next morning it was +4, and the third +6. You get used to it. I only have cold water. I live alone and I don't have a phone. Despite this, it was a relief to move here. The electricity is turned off, so I can't use any electrical appliances."

*Siv:* "What I miss the most is not being able to listen to music."

## "I slipped a few times"

Sometimes the forced isolation gets to them, and EHS fugitives do exactly the things they shouldn't do.

*Inger:* "I 'slipped' and went to a couple of concerts, and to a Christmas buffet at a hotel. I am concerned though, because I know what can happen afterwards. Still I sometimes keep thinking, 'I don't care what happens, I'll manage somehow.' I need to meet people, be part of the world, because it's really important for my soul. I need to feel that I belong to this society. This excursion made me so much worse, that it will take a few months or so to recuperate. Next time I get that impulse I will be more careful."

EHS fugitives can only fantasize about things that most of us take for granted.

*Klas:* "I want to go to Stockholm and just walk around. I love that city."

## The ongoing struggle

Since EHS fugitives have to give up so many of the modern comforts, daily chores are a constant challenge. Imagine that the only suitable house you've found is dilapidated with mould in the basement, a leaky roof and sewage pipes that don't drain. You struggle daily to get out of bed, and you live on very limited financial means. This is how my hosts Siv and Björn live.

Siv tells me about other EHS refugees they know: "Some of us live in decrepit cabins, trailers, cars or tents. One man we know lives in a goat

shack. A reporter wanted to come to his place for an interview, but he cancelled it at the last minute. He was too embarrassed about his home and couldn't cope with the thought of having to show it."

"People wonder what we do all day, how we get the time to pass."

"Living as a fugitive is a very BUSY life!" Siv exclaims with her affable sarcasm, something I really admire in her.

This is what I notice during my visits to Siv and Björn's home:
They bring in the firewood, rest from exhaustion, make a fire, pick up the mail, prepare food, rest from exhaustion, haul in the water, repair this or that, rest again, look for the papers they put somewhere to write yet another letter to the authorities, rest , once again, try to repair what they failed to yesterday, discuss with a neighbour what to do about the mounting threats of wireless internet in their community, try to write another letter to the editor again… For many days nothing at all can be done, the days just disappear in a haze.

## "I have to take just one more step…"

*Siv:* "A couple of EHS fugitives lived here for a week before they could move into their own place. This took so much energy out of me that I practically counted every step I made. When this happens my only thought is, I have to take just one more step…"

"My sister called me a while ago and told me that she had been diagnosed with cancer. My first thought was: 'It is so unfair. I would much rather it had been me.' I don't intend to commit suicide, but I long for the relief. My neighbour down the road considers this an alternative and has said, 'I may have to resort to that if life becomes totally unbearable'."

CHAPTER 7

# Kenneth: I thought it was psychological

*Kenneth is in his forties and has just moved into a house, which he shares with three other EHS refugees.*

My symptoms started around 1994. But when I think of it, I reacted to fluorescent light and heaters long before that. My first apartment had old-fashioned heating elements, and I never felt well there. The same happened when I went into stores with a lot of fluorescent lights. At the time, I thought it was psychological. It took a while before I realized that the actual indoor environment made me sick.

I would get unfocused, forgetful and very tired. It felt a bit like being switched off from the world around. It feels so abstract and hard to describe. I felt something was wrong but couldn't figure out what it was. If you have the flu or a broken leg, it is obvious why you're not well. It was such a relief to finally get in touch with people who understood why I felt this way and could help explain what was going on. My other thoughts were…maybe I have a tumour or brain damage or something like that.

## My guess was mould contamination

I also lived in a 1960s apartment building in Skara for a while, but felt sick there too. My guess was that the building was contaminated with mould or something like that. So I decided to move to a wood-framed house from the 1920s. I felt better there.

In 1999, I moved to another town to attend community college. I was determined to find a wholesome home that was clean from mould, radon and chemicals. I remembered hearing something vague about the effects of electricity, but back then I had no knowledge about that and I didn't make the connection with my own situation. I managed to find an attic apartment in town. After I graduated I did a live-in trial at my brother's house outside Skara. When I once again had to find another apartment in town, electrical heating was not an option for me.

I need to do live-in trials before I rent or buy a place. I have lived in 25-30 different places by now and slept in both cars and tents...Now I own a camping trailer too.

For a while, I lived in a tent in the woods. Later on I found a cabin, but unfortunately with electrical heaters. Still I talked myself into trying it out for a while. I turned the heaters on during the day and spent a lot of time outdoors, and turned them off when I got home. It didn't work anyway.

I wanted to find a self-subsistent farm in the country and I found my dream house in Dalsland County. But I felt really sick there too, probably from the electrical fences and the transmission towers in the area. It was so sad. I managed to last there from mid-June to October/November. That's when I moved here.

## Wasting a couple of months each time

My dream is to buy my own house. I had a lead on a cabin, and I tried it out for 2-3 weeks, but I soon realized that it was no good. Every time I do a live-in trial, a couple of months get wasted. I just lie around apathetic and don't even have the strength to read or do anything of value. I feel relatively OK here. Now I'm careful about not taking risks with my health.

I have moved so many times… it's a mental drain just to unpack my stuff. The only things I bring with me nowadays are my backpack and my guitar.

About working. Employers do not welcome requests like, "Please replace the fluorescent lights. They make me sick." The likelihood of me being replaced instead is very high…

## Like a hobo

This is a real tough life. I don't count on people to understand it. In the beginning, people asked: "What on earth are you doing?" Then they have disappeared out of my life one by one. I have no contact with my family, although my son still sort of keeps in touch. He doesn't want to come and visit me here though, and I don't want to force him. I have to continue my

live-in trial here to see if I can take it. I've been forced to give up a lot. I have no family to help me, and I have not had an intimate relationship during this whole time.

It feels like I now depend on the good will of others. I feel like the hobos must have felt years ago, not being worth as much as their fellow human beings.

Nowadays, people use a lot of medicine, sleeping pills and anti-depressants. They suffer from fibromyalgia, headaches and muscle tension. When I watch people at work, I wonder: "Why are their bodies so tense?" What was it like during the Bronze Age, for instance? Did people suffer as much from headaches back then?

Today people are not allowed to get sick. If you suffer from what is considered a medically diffuse illness, you are out of luck. A cousin of mine once said to me, "Nobody would willingly live like you do. To call you a 'scam artist' is totally absurd!"

CHAPTER 8
# Losing family and friends

*Being an EHS fugitive often means losing friends, and sometimes family too. Many EHS sufferers know what it is like to be misunderstood or abandoned by the people they love or used to trust. Inger's husband left her because he could not accept living like her. Kenneth no longer has contact with his family.*

*Those still in touch with their families have to live with the agony of not being able to help their parents or children in their time of need. Invariably, the whole family suffers in one way or another.*

*Eva:* "In 1992, my mother had a stroke and spent half a year in hospital before she finally let go. It was very difficult for me to visit her. I risked it a couple of times anyway, but I was not able to be by her death bed."

*Elisabeth:* "My mother is 88 years old. We haven't seen each other for a long time. She got really sick last summer and ended up in hospital with intestinal hemorrhage. And I didn't know anything about it. She didn't want to contact me, since I couldn't help her anyway. I got very upset. *I have to know!* I cried over that a whole day. Imagine if she hadn't survived and I knew nothing about it!

I got some psychological coaching to cope with this, and in September I managed to make travel arrangements to see my mother. I forced myself to go, although I was feeling poorly. I visited her and we had a good talk. I felt extremely relieved. We said things we hadn't said before, and I was touched by her love and concern. 'I will be with you all the time in my mind and spirit,' I said to her.

It's so painful to realize that I won't be able to just go and see my mother if she ends up in hospital again. Or if something would happen to my children. Travelling home to them to help out is not as simple as it sounds."

*Siv:* "I have never met my nieces' and nephews' four children. They can drive here to see me, but I don't have enough physical stamina for such visits any more. Having children around is very draining on someone like me."

## The EHS fugitive is not the only one suffering

*The whole family is affected. Eva's husband Thomas is worn out with chronic pain in his hands from the many renovations he has had to make wherever they lived.*

*Thomas:* "I was a store manager for several years and worked alongside 20-30 year olds. Reducing my work hours was impossible with all my responsibilities at the store. The last few years were particularly exhausting. I left home around 7 a.m. and worked until 8-9 p.m. On top of that I had a long commute. During my time off I repaired and rebuilt our many homes. Sometimes I worked on the house until 1 a.m. and got up again at 6 a.m. I have done it all, including plumbing and electricity. It feels like I have removed miles of electrical wiring from walls."

*Eva:* "How have our daughters been affected? They've had a sick mom all these years."

*Thomas:* "Naturally, they have been upset many times, especially when Eva couldn't attend events that their friends' moms were able to go to. One time when Eva's brother and brother-in-law visited us, our oldest daughter blurted out: 'Can't you talk about something else? Just for once!'? "

*Eva:* "Another time she said, 'Mom, I pretend that you are well'."

*Inger:* "My daughter became clinically depressed a few years ago. I told her to get some professional help. So she went to see a psychologist to talk about her situation. Her problems were about having lost her mother, and thereby her given support system. Simple things like going shopping

together and other things mothers and daughters do. We've begun patching things up a bit, but there are still some missing pieces in our communication."

*Kenneth:* "People usually don't understand. In the beginning they asked, 'What on earth are you doing?' But now they have disappeared from my life one by one. I have no contact with my family. I have some contact with my son, but he really doesn't want to visit me here, and I don't want to force him."

*Eva:* "We become inconvenient. We lose friends. They simply disappear. We are unable to visit them at their homes, and people feel uneasy if they get no chance to reciprocate the visit."

*Inger:* "Old friends and neighbours who used to be a big part of my life have slowly disappeared one by one. They think that I'm strange. I met one of my old neighbours when I lived in another cabin. 'I haven't seen you for such a long time', she said. 'I was thinking of visiting you but it's so cold. I'm worried about my leg pains.' 'Thanks, but don't bother to visit. Oh, and where do you imagine I hurt? I live in freezing temperatures all the time.'

Where are all the people who cared about me? Where *are* they? My closest friend is still part of my life. She has not given up on me. But all the others… They know I have a phone, so they could give me a call. But do they? Not a chance…"

*Klas:* "Neighbours around here all react differently. Some think that we are a bunch of idiots, hypochondriacs, or that we abuse the social welfare system. They question things like: 'How are they able to go to a party in town, or go shopping?' They have no clue what price we pay. To use an analogy of alcohol consumption: If you drink too much you feel really sick the next day. For us, the effect of electromagnetic radiation is not limited to just the day after.

One neighbour believes that we are welfare bums and that we create a negative atmosphere in this community. She says that she would never be

able to get social benefits for 'vague' symptoms such as ours.
Good things happen too. One time during the Christmas rush I was standing in a store lineup. The guy in front of me took out his cell phone and started talking. In those situations I often just grin and bear it, but that time I said: 'Sorry, but I have to step out of the lineup for a while, because I get sick from cell phones.' So I walked away. When I returned to my spot, the person behind me tapped me on the shoulder and asked: 'Excuse me, but what do you mean – you get sick? What happens?' The other people around us turned around and listened when I explained the symptoms. Afterwards the guy who asked the question wished me a Merry Christmas."

*Elisabeth:* "People have a really hard time understanding. Often when I've asked people to turn off their cell phones and unplug their digital cordless phones my requests have been respected. Sometimes they ask, 'How can my cell phone affect you when I'm not even using it?' The only answer I have is, 'I don't know exactly why, but I get symptoms just the same.' Among other things, my heart starts to beat irregularly.[17]

At that time I was not as sick as I am now, and then it was easier for people to understand. Nowadays when it is so much worse, people have a really hard time understanding."

*Naser:* "When our neighbour in the summer cabin next door arrives, we have to leave our home. He's promised not to use his cell phone here, but he does it anyway. No use getting violent, although I really feel like it sometimes!"

*Björn:* "Our neighbours and their friends are a constant threat to us, because we never know when they bring stuff around that we'll get sick from. At times someone will cut across our property with their cell phones turned on to test us. Can you imagine ever doing that to someone with a nut allergy; putting a few nuts in their food to see if they get sick? … We seem to be fair game for anybody."

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*17. A cell phone in 'snooze' mode also emits microwaves. Its functions remain active with signals radiating to the nearest relay antenna.*

CHAPTER 9
# Not only adults

*I have only interviewed adults, but children are also affected. Here are three stories about children, one baby and two elementary school students.*

BABY
## Electronics and epilepsy

A young couple was overjoyed about their newborn son, but their joy turned into fear when the baby started having epileptic fits. Life threatening attacks that resulted in several emergency trips to the hospital.

One day the baby's mother discovered a strange looking contraption on the roof of the apartment building across the street. Someone told her that it was a cell phone transmission antenna for the new 3G[18] system. She wondered if this antenna had something to do with her son's epileptic fits, so she asked someone well informed on the subject, who confirmed that there was research to support her conclusion.

The parents were advised to find an area with less radiation from wireless systems, and to not bring any electronic gadgets with them. They followed this advice, and their baby's symptoms disappeared.

They realized that they had to move from their home and leave their electronic gadgetry behind. After finding a new home in an acceptable location, they invited their friends to a house-warming party. They put the roast in the oven, and sat down on the sofa to relax before the guests arrived. All of a sudden their baby had another epileptic fit.

The mother yelled out in despair, but at the same time discovered that she was holding the receiver to the wireless oven thermometer. "Is this the reason?" she thought and quickly pulled the thermometer out of the oven, emptied out the batteries and threw everything in the garbage. The fit stopped. Tears of joy. The guests arrived and the party began.

Since that time there are no more wireless devices in their home. No more epileptic fits. The baby is well. “Spontaneous healing,” the doctor called it, but did not want to hear the parents’ explanation. The nurses, on the other hand, were all ears.

GIRL, 11

## Johanna cannot attend elementary school

*Johanna is 11 years old. Her dad tells her story:*

We moved to the countryside a year ago, when a 3G antenna was installed very close to our home. We lived in the town centre, in a community sold on wireless communication. There were wireless routers in every school. All of us started to sleep poorly upstairs, so we moved down to the recreation room in the basement and slept there for half a year. My wife has EHS since 15 years ago. She knows the symptoms and knows what to be wary of. At this time Johanna began to react to the overall radiation along our street as well. That’s when my wife said: “This won’t do. We have to move away from here.”

### *Headaches and abnormal fatigue*

In the spring, Johanna started having serious headaches at school and often felt abnormally tired. One day when my wife picked up the kids at school she noticed that Johanna didn’t look well. We talked to the teacher about this and that Johanna mentioned feeling worse when she was near the computers.

The teachers tried to accommodate, but there was no noticeable improvement. That was when we contacted the school nurse. She got in contact with the principal, who in turn told her to ignore it.

During the fall term, Johanna became progressively worse. It turned out that the old computers had been replaced with wireless laptops. I made a fuss and the school staff became a bit anxious. Her teacher took on the task of calling a parent-teacher meeting. The principal participated, but concluded: “I believe there is something called electrohypersensitivity, but

that is not the case here. Among other things, we have problems with the ventilation system in this school." The principal blamed my daughter's condition on all kinds of things.

### *Tipping point: the wireless film projector*

Johanna was still able to go to school, but in February she couldn't manage any longer. At that time the school started using a wireless film projector. During the first film screening Johanna's symptoms became so severe that she had to leave the classroom after only a few minutes.

We got very upset. Having tried so hard for six months to get them to listen to us, and instead they introduce yet another wireless gadget. We went after the teacher with our pleas: "Could you please turn it off?" But the teacher flatly refused. Obviously new technology is the Holy Grail of our times. More important than our kids' health.

We decided to get Johanna out of school, and I arranged for a job shadow at my workplace. This arrangement is still in place. We have the standard computer equipment there, but it is hardwired. She now surfs the internet without any problems.

### *Legal battle*

We sat through yet another parent-teacher meeting and were treated very poorly, especially by the principal. This experience made us quite disheartened. Fortunately, we got some help from friends who are familiar with the law.

"You should report this as discrimination," they advised us. In March, we reported Johanna's school to the School Board, and the Board responded fairly quickly. An investigation took place with detailed questions about what had been done so far, and what was planned to enable her return to school. This was our first victory. Until then all the blame had been put on us, so we were overjoyed when we received the news.

### *The physician reported us*

After the parent-teacher meeting, my wife was called for an appointment with the Occupational Health Authorities. Maybe they expected her to show up alone, but we arrived with a friend of ours, a psychologist.

Instead of two against one, we were four against two. They talked about Johanna, and the physician said that we should not worry about her. If she had a headache she could take a Tylenol. We said that we were not worried, because she was not going back to school. “I will report you to Social Services,” the physician said. But we said: “This is a case for the school, and not your responsibility, so you don’t have to be concerned.”

Their reply came in the form of a formal complaint to Social Services.

### *Johanna receives home schooling – finally*

After yet another parent-teacher meeting, Johanna finally received home schooling in her core subjects four hours per week. Earlier on, from February to the end of April, she had no formal education. Instead we picked up her homework at school once a week.

Over time the principal became friendlier and more restrained. We thanked the School Board and told them that their involvement had made Johanna’s school a much friendlier place.

Soon after the letter exchange started in earnest. The principal attacked us by responding to the letters from the School Board. This barrage continued until the summer holidays, when we ended up with the ‘last word,’ with the principal more subdued. She finally said, “Now I won’t write any more.”

Instead a new letter exchange started about the home schooling, because the principal maintained that Johanna received four hours of education per day. In fact it was only three hours. We also questioned the principal on why she deemed it more important to contact the Occupational Health Authorities than the School Board for advice. It didn’t make any sense.

### *School attendance on certain days*

Johanna now goes to school on certain days. When she joins her friends in the lunch room, the staff removes the cordless phone. She also attends gym class and school trips, so she won’t miss out on the social contact. But she is not able to attend on a full-time basis, because she gets too

debilitated there. We already know that electrohypersensitivity is a progressive condition. And it doesn't really matter if a student ends up with good grades. If he or she suffers from EHS, the chances of getting hired are almost nil.

### *The 'big picture'*

Johanna is sensitive to all kinds of wireless devices and also to the digital cordless phones. Once she stayed overnight at a friend's place, and woke up with a headache. The reason was the cordless phone in the house. Next time she stayed over there we asked the parents to unplug the phone. She slept well and did not wake up with a headache. But she has not been invited again.

There is quite the turnover of friends for people in our situation. Some stop calling, but sometimes a new, more caring friend turns up. We have been very fortunate to have the support of some knowledgeable friends.

This community is totally sold on wireless. We have suggested that the school should replace it with fiber-optic cable instead. "No we can't," they reply." – You can't?! My workplace did, why can't you?

As I see it there is no well-grounded knowledge to support that. It looks more like a cult phenomenon to me. For the time being Johanna comes to my workplace three times a week.

BOY, 11

## Jonas' refuge is the summer cabin

*The mother of a family with four children tells her story:*

All of us are sensitive to electromagnetic radiation, although I don't know if it affects my youngest child. Jonas is turning 12 and has the most pronounced symptoms. He suffers from recurring headaches and pressures over his heart. His heartbeat is irregular. The school nurse detected that too, when it increased from 78 to over 100 beats per minute. He describes the symptoms as having a hot frying pan placed on his chest. At times he gasps for air, gets dizzy, his arms and legs get numb, and

his stomach acts up. We notice immediately by the look in his eyes when he is affected.

### *Fewer headaches in the country*

Jonas has not attended school for almost a year. He gets home schooling. For his sake, we moved to a summer cottage without electricity and telephone. This valley acts as a natural shield from microwave radiation, and it's not too far from town. Jonas' headaches disappear when he is here. We still have our house in town and we return from time to time, especially to take showers and do the laundry.

It all started in 2003, when the 3G towers were installed. We returned from our holidays, as the transmission from two towers had just started. They are located 3.5 and 4.5 kilometers respectively from our house. Our immediate symptoms were poor sleep, and our 7 year old daughter kept waking up screaming in the middle of the night. She had never done that before. She complained of pains in her legs.

One of our neighbours also has EHS, so we understood right away what was going on. He was diagnosed with burnout and lives on disability benefits. But he had to flee from this place.

### *Suddenly we slept through the night*

When the nearest 3G tower was shut down for a week, I started sleeping through the night again. All of us actually slept well, and Jonas became his old self again. At the time we didn't understand why. That's when we happened to meet our old neighbour again. "Oh, so you are back?!" we asked. "Yes, have you noticed how great it feels here now when the 3G tower is shut down?" He had brought a radio frequency meter with him and showed us how low the measurements were. A week later the transmission started up again and our symptoms returned.

Jonas was in the first grade at this time, and a WLAN[19] router had been placed directly outside his classroom. This ended with us carrying him home from the school bus. He tried very hard to stay focused at school, but collapsed when he stepped off the school bus. His class later moved to another room a bit further away from the router. He felt a bit better there.

### *The teacher refused to listen*

In fifth grade he got a new teacher who simply refused to understand. She claimed that his symptoms would pass, despite the fact that we had had a parent-teacher meeting with her and Jonas and he had felt pretty sick at the time. She kept talking about how it is normal to feel anxious about anything new. Not true. Jonas loves going to school. He has very good grades and he gets along well with his classmates.

Our oldest son goes to another school. He has a hard time concentrating when the wireless film projector is turned on. Fortunately for him, his teacher understands. The microwave oven in the cafeteria also affected him, but the staff has kindly removed it.

### *Our wireless rural community*

Many people are puzzled by the fact that you can get EHS symptoms in a rural community. But our municipality has been very active in the introduction and promotion of hi-tech, and it is everywhere. Each school is well equipped.

The Superintendent of Education did not want to hear what we had to say, and he did not know that EHS is recognized as a functional impairment in this country.

### *Catch-22*

We have now been given an ultimatum. The School Board believes that it has done its due diligence, and we must either take Jonas to the hospital for a check-up or face legal consequences. The problem is that Jonas is not able to cope with the electromagnetic environment in the hospital either, or the travel there. We promised him not to put him through that ordeal.

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*18. 3G= 3rd Generation wireless telecommunications systems, UMTS*

*19. WLAN= Wireless Local Area Network*

CHAPTER 10
# Contradicted, and not trusted

How are EHS people treated when they seek help from doctors, authorities, civil servants and so on? As you might expect, it varies. Some people have positive experiences. They have received help – or at least some understanding.

*Kenneth:* "I was lucky to find a doctor, someone who knew about EHS and treated me with respect."

*Maria:* "My doctor believed me but couldn't help me. He said that our society doesn't have the necessary resources."

However, the prevailing answer is this:

*Inger:* "I went to Social Services about my housing needs. After I told her about my plight, she hissed at me: "EHS is not scientifically proven. If you apply for services, I'll make sure that your application gets rejected!"

## 'Delusional thinking'

Before I met the EHS refugees, I knew of a 25 year old man who also suffered from EHS. His most debilitating symptom was severe body pains. When he finally realized that his attacks were linked to electricity and cell phones, he tried to explain this to his doctor, who immediately started talking about drugs. After the appointment he happened to glance at the file.  His diagnosis was: delusions.

*Elisabeth:* "The doctor dismissed my complaints. 'EHS doesn't exist!' How could he say so?! My symptoms so evidently displayed in front of the computer. He just didn't want to hear me, and instead prescribed a week's sick leave for 'inexplicable dizziness.' He also referred me to another physician. Great, I thought, hopefully a smarter doctor. But he was even worse.

He allowed more time for the appointment and spent that time giving me a lecture. 'People have always been afraid of new technologies. When trains were introduced, people believed that the speed of the train was really dangerous. Today people think computers are dangerous.'

After that he launched into what he described as mass psychosis, similar to the 19th century 'frog illness', when people believed they had live frogs in their stomachs. He drew a parallel between 'frog illness' and the debilitating symptoms from mercury amalgam and electromagnetic hypersensitivity. He called all that mass psychosis.

He also asked me if I disliked my job. I loved my job. He didn't allow for sick leave, but insisted that I continue with computer work, at least part-time. The only help he offered me was a referral to a psychologist. When I politely asked him to turn off the fluorescent lights in his office because they bothered me so much, he simply ignored my request.

I went to see the doctor because I was in desperate need for help. I didn't understand my body's reactions. It was a terrible insult to be questioned and not believed. I felt completely unnihilated. I cried and cried."

## Dolls and baby shoes?!

*Mia:* "National Insurance wanted me to travel to Nynäshamn for a 4-day examination and stay at a hotel that was 50 meters from a 3G tower. This was obviously impossible. As an alternative they contacted a consultancy for the job assessment. I then had a visit by a doctor, a physiotherapist and a psychologist.

The psychologist had brought dolls and a pair of baby shoes. She started our session by talking about how things sometimes happen during childhood, and how these memories can keep festering inside.

I didn't understand a thing. I said: 'I thought this was about why I am not able to work. Have you read my report?'
No, she had not received it.

'What do you know about me?'
'That you have lived in this cabin for a few years, that your husband died, and you are a widow.'

She knew absolutely nothing about my background. She presumed it was psychological. My childhood experiences and my husband's death…"

## "You don't live in reality"

*Eva:* "We have to be very resilient psychologically to cope with the world around us. Even after all these years,[20] there is still little understanding, but plenty of doubt and mistrust.

When doctors don't know what's wrong, they send us to psychologists or psychiatrists. I was sent to a psychiatrist with a bizarre approach. He sat with his feet on the table and challenged me: 'So you can feel electricity. Describe it!' I did, and that's when he pounded his fist on the table and yelled: 'You don't live in the reality. We have had electricity for over a hundred years!'

Our health care system is appalling. It seems like it's perfectly okay for physicians to talk to us with contempt. Even today I won't tell a doctor that I suffer from EHS. It gets too complicated. I've been called for a mammogram, and I won't tell them either. I just have to endure.

Yet, it is not healthy to stay silent just because health professionals have unprofessional attitudes."

My thoughts precisely.

## Scared of new technology? No, delighted

One common belief my new friends constantly hear is that they are afraid of new technology, that their symptoms are psychological. My interviews reveal a different story. Many of them have been totally immersed in new technology. Like Inger who spent many nights in front of the computer, or

Klas who worked as a multimedia producer. Maybe that's the reason why they got sick.

Elisabeth tells me how it all started for her.

"I worked as a preschool teacher. It was a lot of fun, although quite the strain on my body. I ended up on part-time sick leave because of pains in my shoulders and neck. I realized that it would be hard to return to work full-time. So instead I took a course in graphic design. I worked on a computer and my new-found career was so much fun!

When I finished my education, I got an apprenticeship. After three weeks I felt burnt out. I was dizzy and really tired, had heart trouble, skin and eye problems, headaches, and felt so unfocused. One morning I experienced those symptoms as soon as I turned on the computer. 'I can't make it,' I thought and went home and spent a couple of days in bed shivering.

I was quite sick but had no idea that it could be EHS, because I didn't know what it was."

## A phobia? Quite the opposite!

Calling EHS a phobia is not too unusual. However, nobody I've talked to displays phobic reactions. A phobic individual categorically avoids situations and places that present as frightening, often beyond reason.

My friends proved the opposite to be true. They deliberately tested locations, where they had noticed that their symptoms got worse. They valiantly walked towards cell phone transmission towers and electrical fences to verify their symptoms. By doing so they found out what they can tolerate, what causes discomfort, and what is disabling for them.

Many also keep on doing what they know they should avoid. They go into stores, although this makes them worse, or go to a concert or a restaurant, because they can't stand being isolated all the time. They visit relatives, although they always get struck by overwhelming fatigue. This is the direct opposite to phobic behaviour.

*Eva:* “I get stubborn sometimes. I don’t want to be affected by EHS. I want to be normal! That’s when I do things I shouldn’t be doing, like traveling somewhere just to get the opportunity to mingle with people. And that’s how I get sicker.”

Many of the people I interviewed knew they were sensitive to something, although the explanation came later. Eva talks about how her husband detected how she got increasingly worse in the cottage museum, while she wondered if she was imagining things.

My conclusion is that all the people I interviewed are very rational and tell their stories with remarkable insight. It makes no sense that a physician or anyone else listening to them should even consider that their symptoms are just imagination, psychological weakness or a mental aberration. Unbelievable really. It makes me wonder – with a grain of sarcasm: Is the medical profession delusional?!?

*****

## Why the denial?

*Björn:* “We are not treated as regular human beings in our full right, and our experiences do not count.”

I keep wondering why these first-hand experiences are so hard for society to accept. I presume there are a number of contributing factors.

One reason is likely the powerful economic interests surrounding the telecommunications industry, supported by our government. History tells us that this is nothing new. The same happened with the tobacco and asbestos scandals, with several pharmaceutical drugs, with pesticides, and herbicides too. The industry resists the spread of vital facts by covering up with disinformation, until the facts are too obvious to ignore.

## The consequences

When it comes to family and friends, there are other reasons why they choose to avoid the truth. Acceptance of this insight may entail a need for major lifestyle changes. Many of them are so accustomed to electrical gadgets, cell phones and cordless phones and are simply reluctant to take in new information. The consequences are too serious and may hamper their routines, relationships and their entire lifestyle.

*Mia:* "My family is willing to help me, but they don't really get what this is all about. It is not only the industry we are up against, but all the people around us as well. Few are willing to live without their wireless gadgets. Most of our relatives won't, and that's very hard on us. Everyone has surrendered to the marketing trends. I'd probably do the same if this hadn't happened to me. I'd likely be stuck in the same mess too."

## Provocations

*Björn:* "Before we bought this cottage, we went and talked to our neighbour-to-be in the summer cottage next door. We told him that we would buy this property, provided that nobody uses a cell phone around us. So we would appreciate if he spoke his mind on the subject. We asked if he would be willing to leave his cell phone at home when visiting his cottage. 'Sure, of course.' After all, he already had a landline there. Again we asked: 'Are you sure? We don't want to pester you.' 'No problem,' he assured us.

Nowadays, when he and his family arrive, they always bring their cell phones along. When we mentioned it again, he blurted out: 'Enough already.' 'But don't you remember your word?' 'Yes, but that was three years ago!' Now we have to flee whenever they come around.

We are always on guard, and when they arrive we take off right away. As soon as we hear a car we check out who it is. If we ignore their arrival, we may be too debilitated after a few minutes, which makes it harder for us to escape. One time our neighbour arrived with his family while I was out for a walk in the forest. When I came back I found Siv on the ground beside the wood pile. She had fainted.

Neighbours and friends become 'enemies', because we never know when they bring something along that could make us sick. Sometimes people in our community cut across our property with activated cell phones just to test us, to see if we really react!! We are treated as fair game."

*Siv,* who could sense my digital camera, comments:
"Several provocation studies have been done on EHS sufferers and cell phones. This type of testing is supposed to reveal if we can detect if the phones are on or off. The problem is that these laboratory studies are carried out in locations that are already heavily infested for people like us. When I go into town I don't notice right way when someone turns on a cell phone, because I already feel sick by the overall radiation. It's like being in a smoke-filled room and asked to detect when someone lights up another cigarette."[21]

Other studies have focused on identifying psychological differences between EHS sufferers and 'normal' people. It should come as no surprise that these tests have failed.[22]

## World concept threatened

Maybe EHS threatens our perception of the modern world too much. Maybe that is why physicians are able to say this condition does not exist, or that EHS is a form of delusion? It seems very difficult to accept that human beings can be affected by electromagnetic signals, despite the fact that our body, heart, nervous system and brain in fact function on such signals.

Also EKG and EEG are electrical phenomena. And although other forms of electromagnetic waves, such as x-rays, radioactivity and radar have been proved extremely detrimental, people still buy into the notion that these particular waves are harmless.

Fact remains that the physiological functions in living beings are controlled by subtle electrical impulses and waves, all the way down to the cellular level. Since electromagnetic fields have a synergistic effect on each other, it should be easy to understand that our body's electrical system can be

negatively affected by man-made electromagnetic fields, especially microwave radiation. Nowadays, each one of us is subjected to artificial radiation a billion times stronger than the natural background radiation that we are biologically built to withstand.

## Biased expert

In August 2007, the Swedish television news program Aktuellt exemplified how skepticism surrounding this issue plays out in this country. The report began with the argument that municipalities have spent millions on electromagnetic mitigation efforts for EHS sufferers, despite the lack of scientific proof that these efforts solve any problems. An odd statement considering that very few municipalities spent any money at all.

Professor Lena Hillert delivered the scientific commentary. She is known for her opinion on EHS, namely that it can be cured by using cognitive therapy. Worth noting is that the Auditor General's Office deemed her a biased expert in 2000,[23] since she also works for the telecom industry. During the television interview she was once again asked: "Is it dangerous to do electromagnetic mitigation?" She answered, and I quote:

> "There may be a danger insofar as the individual may subject himself or herself to limits; that he or she feels a need to isolate from society, family and friends. There may also be a risk that others begin to wonder if certain environments are harmful, since they are being tested and mitigated for people who feel sick. Maybe thinking, 'Is it dangerous for me too?'"

In other words, health and safety precautions are a threat to people.
*I could hardly believe my ears.*

All over the country, EHS sufferers are continually searching for tolerable living environments. One such group, Frivolten, has been working for a few years on locating areas where the overall radiation is low enough to build EHS housing. Suitable areas have been found, and a few municipalities have expressed their interest. However, existing laws make it difficult to protect these locations from the wireless build-out. Frivolten continues tenaciously to look for options, despite the many barriers.

A group in the town of Degerfors actually found a suitable apartment building for EHS. A plan also went ahead for electromagnetic mitigation, with the financial support from SBO (National Mortgage & Housing). The response from the municipality was positive, and 150 people applied for the apartments. That's when the Industry weighed in on the matter with an e-mail from MTB (Telecom Industry Association) Chief Executive Mats Holme. He insisted that no proof existed that electromagnetic mitigation could improve anybody's health. Alas, the municipality changed its position – no EHS-friendly building in this town.

## Not only in Sweden

Sometimes the public debate argues that EHS exists only in Sweden, and thereby alluding to it being an imaginary illness. This is absolutely not true. In every country where this issue has been raised, the same symptoms have been found: dizziness, severe headaches, nausea, poor short-term memory, confusion, tinnitus and disturbed sleep.

In Austria an estimated 3,5 % of the population suffers from EHS, a number that has doubled in the last ten years. In Germany it is 9 % and in Switzerland 5 %.

Support groups for EHS sufferers exist in Germany, Austria and several other countries. EHS sufferers are reaching out across the borders to help each other. The primary issue is to find tolerable living environments.

Irish doctors (IDEA) has released public alerts, and so have physicians in the US, Austria and Japan. German doctors are very active. They also pioneered with the Freiburg Appeal in 2002.

## The Freiburg Appeal:

### *"Our great concern – the health of our fellow human beings"*

In 2002, 60 German physicians began their appeal with:
"As established physicians in all fields, especially in environmental medicine, we turn to the medical establishment and that in public health,

political domains, and to the public to express our deep concern for the health of our fellow men."

These doctors had in recent years noticed "a dramatic rise in chronic and serious diseases", including:

- Learning, concentration, and behavioural disorders ( attention deficit disorder, ADD)
- Extreme fluctuations in blood pressure, not responding satisfactorily to pharmaceutical treatment
- Heart rhythm disorders
- Heart attacks and strokes among an increasingly younger population
- Brain-degenerative diseases (Alzheimer's) and epilepsy
- Cancer: leukemia, brain tumours
- Headaches, migraines
- Chronic fatigue
- Agitation, anxiety
- Night-time sleeplessness, day-time sleepiness
- Tinnitus
- Susceptibility to infection
- Unspecific nerve and muscle pains.

The German physicians conclude that microwave radiation in their patients' living environments is the culprit. They write:
"Very often long-term disease or affliction improve or disappear in a relatively short time after the reduction or elimination of microwave radiation in the patient's environment."

The Appeal continues:
"Our therapeutic efforts to restore health are becoming increasingly less effective. The unimpeded and continuous penetration of radiation into living and working areas – particularly bedrooms, an essential place for relaxation, regeneration and healing – causes uninterrupted stress and prevents the patient's full recovery."

Several thousand German physicians have now signed the Freiburg Appeal.

## The Bamberg Appeal:
### *"We demand immediate action"*

A couple of years later physicians in the German town of Bamberg initiated a more systematic survey on how people are affected by, for example, radiation from cell phone transmission towers.

This study resulted in a letter to Germany's Environmental Health Minister in 2006:
"There is an acute health risk for people living close to the mentioned mobile base stations. It is necessary for authorities to act immediately."

*More quotes from the letter:*
"From October 2004 to January 2006, over 900 individuals were interviewed at 184 locations with transmission towers. Measurements were completed in homes or at workplaces."

*Summary of physicians' clinical observations:*
"A new, very complicated disease profile with characteristic symptomatic combinations is observed from digital high frequency electromagnetic fields (from relay antennas, digital cordless phones, WLAN,[24] etc.), far below current safety standards."

*This description is followed by a list of symptoms similar to that of the Freiburg Appeal.*

"The harmful health effects affect us all, our children and yours. We cannot ignore this fact. We ask you therefore to take action immediately."

## The BioInitiative Report
In September 2007 the BioInitiative Report was released by *independent* researchers, who had reviewed thousands of reports and articles, and concluded that electromagnetic fields cause numerous health problems.

*Quotes from the BioInitiative Report:*
"There is little doubt that electromagnetic fields emitted by cell phones and cell phone use affect electrical activity of the brain."

## Official warnings

- In August 2007 the German Environmental Minister published a warning on the installation of wireless internet in schools.
- EEA – European Environmental Agency – also published a warning about the health effects from wireless technology based on the BioInitiative Report. EEA demands immediate action for the reduction of exposures to cell phones, transmission towers and wireless systems.

And in Sweden???

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20. *Swedish Association for the ElectroSensitive (aka FEB) was founded in 1987.*
21. *Commentary: Excerpt from Swedish book* About Elctrohypersensitivity *Hélène Aastrup-Samuels): One research study by Dr W. Rea and his colleagues at the Environmental Health Clinic in Dallas, Texas tested individual sensitivity to electromagnetic frequencies. They examined the pupils of EHS sufferers during various frequency exposures and identified the frequencies the subjects reacted to. Other provocation tests confirmed these findings.* Evaluation of the Anatomic Nervous System Response by Pupillographical Study in the Chemically Sensitive Patient.
22. *Professor Bengt Arnetz, Chief Physician, Centre for Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Huddinge Regional Hospital:*
"The psychological model or that electrohypersensitives are more prone to psychiatric conditions is unfounded. *Cancer & Allergy Foundation Magazine, #1, 1996.*
23. *In connection to the RALF survey, 1997 (Council for Work Life Research). Now defunct.*
24. *Wireless internet (Wireless Local Area Network)*

CHAPTER 11
# Human Rights: in theory and practice

*Before I got to know the EHS sufferers I thought that Sweden was a country where, as a rule, laws and human rights were respected. I've changed my opinion on this matter.*

## A recognized functional impairment

In Sweden, electrohypersensitivity (EHS) is recognized as a functional impairment. According to Swedish law, the municipalities are required to assist people who are unable to manage daily living as a result of their functional impairment. Your needs are supposed to determine what assistance you are entitled to, nothing else.

*Elisabeth:* "I was unable to go shopping, do laundry or use the telephone. I needed help because I was disabled. A social worker came here to talk to me about my needs for assistance with shopping, laundry, post office and bank errands, and someone to make phone calls so I could find a new place to live. A week later he came back and asked: 'How do you feel?' 'Getting by, better than at my previous home but I'm far from well,' I said. 'Well, I can't understand how you manage to live here. It's just 14 kilometers to the radio and television mast, and it emits so and so many kilowatts. How can you handle that?'

In other words, he questioned my disability. Instead of evaluating my need for assistance, he had checked the transmission data for the television mast. According to the law, the individual's needs determine what assistance is required. He did not follow the national policy protocol.

His reasoning against my eligibility for assistance also attacked my ability to drive, which I sometimes do when I feel a bit better. He said: 'Our rules are such that if you can drive the car to the store, you cannot get shopping assistance.' Yet, I was unable to go *inside* the store! In other words, he

didn't bother to put my needs in context to *my particular problems and difficulties.*

After that National Insurance rejected my request, despite my doctor's personal conversation with the social worker for over an hour. I was flabbergasted when I received the rejection letter! That I should get no help at all was totally inconceivable to me."

Elisabeth adds, after recounting her experiences: "During my stay at the campground, Social Services in that municipality helped out right away. A female social worker came by to find out what I needed. 'What do you need help with?' she asked. 'Food, laundry, post office and bank errands a couple of times a week,' I replied. 'Will two times a week be sufficient? You have such a small fridge. I think you need help three times a week', she said.
She believed me. It felt so amazing."

It is appalling that we have to argue about basic human rights in our country.

According to our national Social Services legislation, a person unable to manage daily routines has the right to receive assistance.

*Siv's commentary:* "Rights?! Politicians often remark to us: 'You have the same rights as all of us.' That implies that we are entitled to home assistance with no electromagnetic hazards. The pain and dizziness render me unable to manage my daily routines.
It would mean that the home care workers must not use cell phones or other wireless technology and arrive in cars without advanced electronics. They would have to clean without a vacuum cleaner and cook on a wood stove. So far, I'm not aware of anyone receiving this kind of home assistance."

## The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Sweden has ratified the UN Ruling on Human Rights. Here are some citations:

*Article 3*
Everyone has the right to life, liberty and *security of person.*

*Article 5*
No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or *degrading treatment* or punishment.

*Article 12*
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to *attacks upon his honour and reputation*. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

*Article 13*
Everyone has the right to *freedom of movement and residence* within the borders of each state.

What do these rights mean to the EHS sufferer? *Personal safety* when constantly exposed to harmful electromagnetic radiation? *Freedom to travel* when unable to use regular transit? *Freedom to choose* when there are hardly any places left to live with low radiation? Nobody should be treated *disrespectfully*. What should we call the conduct demonstrated by physicians and other authorities towards several of my friends?

## Savings wiped out

Many of my new friends have had their savings wiped out, and their rights to obtain financial assistance is constantly questioned.

*Inger:* "I wrote a letter to Social Services and told them about my situa-

tion, but my application was turned down. The social worker never visited me in any of my homes: in the trailer, the cabin, or by the tree stump."

*Mia:* "They terminated my disability benefits. It was so surreal to get this news. After some time I got it reinstated. Right now they are reassessing everyone on disability in this district. The pressing question is, will I keep my eligibility? If not, how will I get enough money to move? Where will I be able to live?

This pressure is relentless: Will I get financial assistance from National Insurance? What happens if I don't? We are constantly questioned and scrutinized."

Mia's claim was rejected. The authorities maintain that she is fit to re-enter the job market.

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*25. United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, December 20, 1993*

CHAPTER 12

# Listen to them!

While I was traveling around to visit the EHS refugees, I kept mulling over many questions. One of them was: Why don't people believe them?

I returned home with many more questions. Why don't people listen to them? I had met several exceptionally lucid, wise and pragmatic individuals. If someone is able to clearly describe his or her symptoms and what actually happens to them in specific locations, why don't people believe them? If several hundred people experience basically the same thing, why don't people believe them? If millions of people in other countries also experience the same symptoms, without any contact with each other, why are they still not heard?

People with EHS have learned a lot about their condition and their symptoms. And also about how they can get better or worse. They also know how it is possible to live a better, or at least a more tolerable life. We need to learn from them instead of doubting them. They have a message for us all: EHS can happen to anyone!

There is no logical reason to believe that these people's physique, central nervous system or brain are any different from yours or mine. What happened to them can happen to you or me. During an epidemic, not everyone get sick. Some people are more susceptible and/or are subjected to more harmful exposure. They get sick. Next time others will get sick. The question now is: Are we at the beginning of a new epidemic?

Clearly, we should be creating low radiation areas for people with EHS, where they can live with dignity. For the sake of our children and future generations, instead of escalating electromagnetic pollution, we must reduce it!

APPENDIX A

# References and Recommended Reading

## Scientific Mega Studies & Reviews

*The BioInitiative Report.*
Published in 2007. An independent mega review by scientists, researchers & public health policy professionals advocating for biologically-based exposure standards of electromagnetic radiation. *www.bioinitiative.org*

*REFLEX study.*
Released in 2005 and financed by the European Union. Between 2000-2004, 12 research teams from 7 European countries found that electromagnetic fields have a genotoxic effect on human cells, i.e. harmful effects on the DNA far below current Swedish safety limits. The results show that the effects damage the DNA and also impede body systems.

## Physicians' Appeals

*Freiburg Appeal. 2002*
*Bamberg Appeal. June 2006*

## Books in English

- *Black on White*. The Swedish experience of EHS. This hushed up governmental EHS survey of 1997 was revised to book form and published in Swedish 2001 . Rigmor Granlund-Lind & John Lind. English translation, 2005.
- *Cellphones: Invisible Hazards in the Wireless Age.* George Carlo & Martin Schram. 2001.
- *Cellular Telephone Russian Roulette.* A historical and scientific perspective. Robert C. Kane. 2001.
- *The Body Electric*. Electromagnetism and the Foundation of Life. Robert O. Becker & Gary Selden. 1985.
- *The Invisible Disease*. The Dangers of Environmental Illnesses caused by Electromagnetic Fields and Chemical Emissions. Gunni Nordström. 2004. www.johnhunt-publishing.com

## Books in Swedish

- *Mörkläggning*. Elektronikens rättlösa offer *(The Cover-up)*. No legal rights for the injured and sick from new technology. Gunni Nordström. 2000. Hohforlag.se
- *Något som finns men inte syns (It exists but cannot be seen)*. Personal experiences and reflections on declining health from EMR. Christine von Hedenborg. 2006.
- *Nödbroms (Emergency Brake)*. A handbook for forward-thinking retros. Sture Hegerfors & Lasse Åberg. Forum 2001.
- *Om elöverkänslighet (About electrohypersensitivity)*. Facts about a serious functional impairment. Hélène Aastrup-Samuels. FEB – The Swedish Association for the ElectroSensitive. 2005. www.feb.nu or www.feb.se
- *Spelet om 3G (The Wireless Gamble)*. Freelance journalists expose the wireless expansion cover-up in Sweden. Mona Nilsson & Marica Lindblad. Medikament Faktapocket 2005. www.medikament.se
- *Tål du el? (Sensitive to Electricity?)* On health, electricity and technology. Clas Tegenfeldt (Civil Engineer/Environmental Consultant). 2001. www.rtk.se

## Note: OTHER CLASSICS

*Cell Towers.* Wireless Convenience? Or Environmental Hazard? Edited by B. Blake Levitt. 2000.

*Cross Currents.* The Perils of Electropollution. The Promise of Electromedicine. Robert O. Becker. 1990.

*Electromagnetic Fields.* A Consumer's Guide to the Issues and How to Protect Ourselves. B. Blake Levitt. 1995.

*Är de verkligen sjuka? (Are they really sick?)* Electrohypersensitivity and dental amalgam toxicity: A project report on health problems related to sickness from mercury amalgam and electromagnetic radiation. Summary in English. www.hetprojectet.info

Appendix B

# About the Author

Gunilla Ladberg is a Ph. D. in educational psychology, a well-known lecturer, and the author of some 20 books, mainly on psychology, preschool and school education, multilingualism, and latest a book on the human brain, Den mänskliga hjärnan – en upptäcktsfärd (The Human Brain – a journey of discovery).

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